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AT FULL OF MOON.

THE hoar frost glitters on the ground.
 Behind the wood, below the stars,
 The full moon breaks in silver bars,
 A cloudy ring of gold around ;
 A ring that fades, and clouds that flee,
 A moon that climbeth steadily,
 And light that falleth like a sea
 Of silence poured around.

FRANK LEWIS.

THE ROSE.

I ASKED a tiny rose-bud why it grew,
 So fair and still—
 She answered : “ ’T is the sunshine, and the dew,
 And God’s sweet will ! ”

I asked the opening floweret whence its bloom,
 So soft and bright—
 She answered : “ Through the silence and the gloom
 Of dewy night ! ”

I asked the perfect blossom how it flowered,
 O’er desert sods—
 She answered : “ Though the tempest darkly lowered,
 The day was God’s ! ”

WILLIAM M. BRIGGS.

A CABINET-MAKER OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

In England, the South Kensington Museum—whose visitors weekly number thousands—and the original and universally read writings of the eminent critic Ruskin have largely contributed toward the widespread taste for interior decoration and ornamentation which, up to the present century, was considered the special privilege of aristocratic households. Talented and well-known writers, intelligent and zealous editors, possessed of capital, aided this tendency by the publication of books and reviews whose leading attraction was due to the engravings and illustrations

of which they were chiefly composed. The first result of this praiseworthy activity was to call attention to masters and works nearly forgotten. Persevering investigation and close research followed; excellent models of the time of William III., Queen Anne, and the first two Georges were disinterred from the dust of attics, snatched from worms and other wood-destroying insects, as well as from the decaying damp of cellars, and put side by side with those which at the beginning of the century had displaced them, without any other reason than the caprice of foreign fashion, which held sway during the reign of the last two Georges and William. These models of the close of the eighteenth century, thus rescued from the oblivion to which they had been relegated, regained such decided popularity that, even now, all large manufacturers in England vie with one another in reproducing them, and there are few English collectors of the present day who do not possess a specimen, either genuine or doubtful.

The cabinet work of the second half of the eighteenth century merits special study. It is, doubtless, far from perfect, far from realizing all the conditions of decorative art, as now understood, but it has incontestably a decided stamp and characteristic marks, which, in many respects, justify the favor it has received.

In England, as well as elsewhere, the cabinet makers did not escape the rococo tendency of the period, and the purity of their designs was unhappily affected by it. On the other hand, the more modest and severe style of Louis XVI. perceptibly modified English originality. A still more important fact to be noted is that the designer and artisan worked

too independently of one another, a want of conscience and care in following correct constructive principles often showing itself in the most flagrant manner. The forms of the period were more regular than those in the rococo style, the sweeping curves less whimsically independent. This regard for forms, however, was not accompanied by a wiser discrimination concerning the materials to which they were adapted. The designs were made for execution in stone or metal as well as in wood. The proof of this is to be found in the collection of original drawings by the Adam Brothers, preserved in the Soane Museum, and so extensive in its character that it embraces every object of interior or exterior house decoration. There is an exact similarity in all these designs, which are, in reality, only adaptations of classical models unaltered by the artists. Architectural ornamentation of marble temples is transferred, in all its integrity, to parts of wooden furniture and arabesques, borrowed from the compositions of Raphael, found servilely reproduced on door-knobs and handles of punch-spoons.

Thus, the English cabinet work of the last half of the eighteenth century should not be studied with the severe eye of the purist, whom no fault escapes, but rather with the caution of the connoisseur, who appreciates the tastes and ideas peculiar to an epoch, and finds, in consequence of this wise moderation, more to praise than harshly condemn.

The most widely known and meritorious of these English cabinet makers was unquestionably Thomas Chippendale, who, aided by his sons, reigned supreme in the manufacture of furniture in London during the latter half of the eighteenth century. In order to un-

derstand his importance in connection with the history of decorative art, it will be necessary to recall the condition of furniture when Chippendale commenced to work, and the surroundings in the midst of which he exercised his talent. Without going farther back than the reign of Charles II., it can be announced as a general rule that the furniture of palaces and houses of the nobility consisted chiefly of pieces

simple and common oak furniture of the time of James II. was to be seen,— chairs and tables, similar to those depicted in pictures of interiors of that date, wardrobes, chests, and bureaux, such as are even now manufactured in certain remote rural localities. Thus it was until the advent of William of Orange, when the incursion of Dutch taste manifested itself. In architecture, the last vestiges of the Gothic and

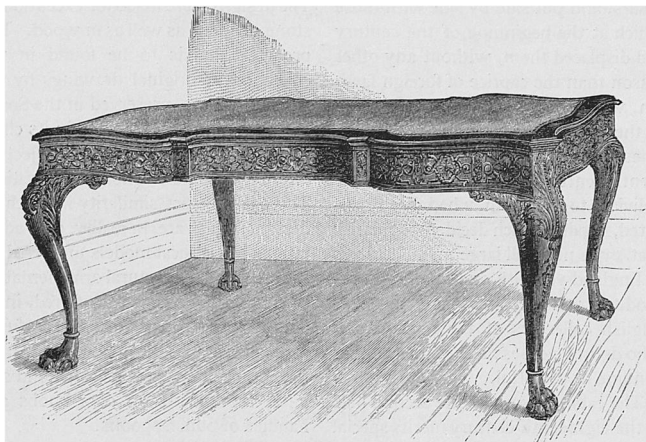


TABLE BY THOMAS CHIPPENDALE.

transmitted from generation to generation with the landed estates, and belonging in great part to the Elizabethan epoch and that of James I., with some acquisitions from abroad brought home by ancestors who had traveled. On the other hand commerce with France, chiefly under Louis XIV., had introduced a small number of Parisian bits of furniture, particularly those from the workshops of André Boule and his successor. In middle-class homes, on the contrary, dating from the last fifteen years of the seventeenth century, only the

of the princely works of Inigo Jones and his successors suddenly disappeared to make way for red brick. The same revolution took place in furniture; incrustation and the most elaborate inlaid work were in great demand; chests, sideboards, and bureaux with bulging fronts only, and chairs and tables with carved and twisted legs were to be seen. In the mean time the rococo style, devoid of æsthetic taste, sprang up in France, and the rich Englishman, always ready to adopt eccentricities, was quickly captivated by the gilding, tin-

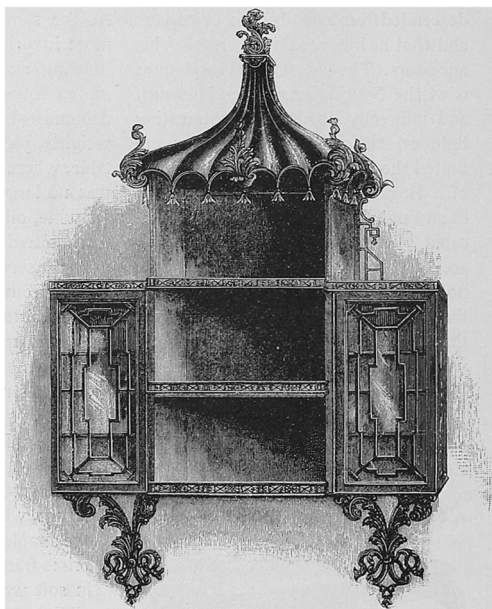
sel and shell-work. The craze quickly spread from high to low, and the middle classes shortly followed the lead of the nobility and gentry.

Then Chippendale appeared, at a time exceptionally favorable to cabinet work. The middle classes were beginning to understand the road to fortune as well as, if not better than, the aristocracy, and to maintain their commercial and political importance; civil wars were at an end, the new dynasty had triumphed over the last attempt to effect the restoration of the Stuarts; the horizon was clear; everything foreshadowed a peaceful and prosperous future. The commerce of England with Holland aided in diffusing the taste for pottery and the lacquered ware of the Orient;—newly acquired riches created new wants; the common people, in imitation of the nobility, demanded sumptuous houses; sighed for the extreme of luxury to be obtained in France and London; demanded a style of furniture altogether peculiar to itself, which should at the same time rival that of Paris.

Still another occurrence, the introduction into England of Spanish mahogany, favored the creation of the new style so impatiently awaited and demanded. The different kinds of wood chiefly employed before that

time were the oak, chestnut, ash, and beech.

The styles of furniture, prior to the reign of William III., consisted of a frame-work with a rectangular base, ornamented with carved pieces and moldings, to which oak, whose open grain does not lend itself to extreme fineness of detail, was specially adapted. The pe-



CABINET BY CHIPPENDALE.

culiar style of Chippendale's work and that of his successors demanded, on the contrary, an altogether different wood. The delicate carving and free curves could be produced only by using a fine, hard, close-grained wood of extreme resisting power. Mahogany united to all these advantages color and polish. It is almost superfluous to say that with-

out this wood, so beautiful in every respect, the work of the English cabinet-makers of the eighteenth century would have been impossible. Thomas Chippendale established himself in Mark Lane, London, some years prior to 1754. Little is known of him or his surroundings, although the parish register furnishes some slight details concerning his origin. It is known that he descended from a family of wood-carvers and that he inherited the secrets of his ancestors. The oldest of his catalogues is at the South Kensington Museum, and indirectly sheds some interesting light on his character. In him were united the brave and independent spirit of a Hogarth with the practical views of an English merchant. This is indicated by the general tone of the preface of this treatise, as well as by the notes and remarks which accompany the designs; it is also to be inferred that he paid little attention to critics, whom he despised, challenging them

desired to honor him with their patronage, nobles or gentlemen, the assurance that each one of his designs would be finished with beauty and elegance. This catalogue also proves that furniture specially adapted to the display of ornaments dates from this period, when pottery, lacquer-work, bronzes, and other metal-work entered for the first time into interior decoration in England. At the same time, furniture became more luxurious and more convenient. Reading and writing having become more frequent and general, there was a demand for book-supports, desks, paperweights, pads, and escritoirs. On the table, where the simplicity of a past age was no longer to be seen, were cases for wine, oil-holders, lamp-stands, and the hundred fancy objects which complete the service of a table. The fashion, general from this time forth, of drinking tea gave birth to all kinds of boxes, trays, and little round tables. Chippendale and his contemporaries invented all the articles for which the past offered no model.

The ordinary furniture of Chippendale comprises three classes of distinct artistic value. The first is pure rococo, where the cabinet-maker does the simple work of carving, and comprises frames for glasses, mirrors cut in soft wood and ornamented with gilding, and of door panels and other furniture in Spanish mahogany. There is a studied carelessness about the sweeping lines; the volutes and spirals interlace capriciously, and the fantastic contours are widely different from nature, often terminating in the head of a griffin or sphinx, or perhaps in a bouquet of flowers, or again, in a mermaid or warlike trophy. Here we find a Gothic arrow, attached to



SIÈGE BY CHIPPENDALE.

to produce such work as they arrogated to themselves the right to criticise. On the other hand, he gave to those who

nothing, serving as a support; there the semblance of a classic pediment; sometimes the fragment of a ruin is

The third class is the most important, for in it the artist manifests his highest power. The different parts of the fur-



TABOURET BY CHIPPENDALE.

boldly inserted into the body of the work, or perhaps a huntsman, or a couple of lovers, or a conventional Chinaman, with mustache and indescribable hat, fill the first vacant space. The two sides are rarely alike, symmetry being studiously avoided; all is turned, twisted, confused, confounded, and entangled, like the disordered phantoms of a troubled dream.

Fortunately, this first class forms the least part of Chippendale's work. In the second are pieces in relief, shelves and small chests for rare china, small artistic objects for the decoration of drawing-room and bedroom. The work of the artisan is here marked by the excellence of its finish, the delicacy of which remains unimpaired after one hundred years of use.

niture, which, as a rule, is square or rectilinear, are adorned or enriched by deep and skillful carving, often in geometrical forms. Although chair-backs are rounded, straight lines predominate, and the curves are managed with such subtle art that the general impression of strength and solidity is not lost. Supports, such as the legs of tables and chairs, are ordinarily straight and carved on the surface, so that their use is perfectly indicated.

The characteristic mark of Chippendale's furniture is the extreme care with which the slightest detail is executed. Chippendale was a wonderfully endowed carver and sculptor, making wood speak beneath his chisel and vibrate in its inmost fiber to the echo of his genius.